

4.0 Example TOD Communities in Connecticut

Connecticut has a long history of commuter rail service. At the peak of its operation in 1950, the New Haven Railroad had only 1,800 miles of track but carried more passengers than any other railroad in the history of the United States Railroad industry. Today there are fifty active railroad stations in Connecticut. Rail service is provided by Metro-North Railroad’s New Haven Main Line and New Canaan, Danbury and Waterbury Branches. The Connecticut Department of Transportation’s Shore Line East Line provides service between New London and New Haven. Amtrak provides regional rail connections at many stations throughout the state.

Commuter rail in Connecticut has always and will continue to play a major role in transportation in the State. It should be noted that nearly 85% of all weekday commuter travel from Connecticut to New York is by train, making the New Haven Line one of the busiest commuter rail lines in the country. It should also be noted that the Stamford Transit Center has become not only the busiest rail station in Connecticut, but also the second busiest, after Grand Central Terminal, on the entire Metro-North System.

Today, Connecticut’s challenge is to build upon its long history of commuter rail service and to provide more opportunities for TOD. To begin to meet this challenge, a number of municipalities have initiated efforts to develop TOD within their communities. These efforts include the development of TOD zoning regulations, private sector investment in TOD, intermodal facility planning, market analysis, and integration of parking expansion plans with TOD

These efforts demonstrate that Connecticut is very active in pursuing TOD opportunities at many different levels. These include rail service enhancements, integrated planning and development efforts at the municipal, regional and statewide level, as well as many levels of private sector investment. This section of the report provides relevant examples of these activities that are applicable to TOD within the Danbury Branch corridor.

City of Stamford – TOD Zoning Regulations

The City of Stamford’s 2002 Master Plan identified a series of neighborhood centers that, through the use of principles of TOD and New Urbanism, could become focal points for development and growth while maintaining a lower density and scale than a typical downtown neighborhood. Local interest and transit access



Springdale Station

combined to identify Glenbrook and Springdale as early case studies. The neighborhoods of Glenbrook and Springdale each have a rail station on the New Canaan Branch. The neighborhoods recently completed a multi-year planning process to reposition their village centers as walkable Main Streets ensuring that all infill development is transit-oriented.

In January 2009, new zoning and design guidelines for Springdale were approved that combine a variety of elements to achieve TOD. These elements include a progressive approach to parking that acknowledges the neighborhood’s transit service and walkability.

City of Stamford – Harbor Point TOD

Harbor Point is being planned as a model of TOD, incorporating innovative urban design, community planning, and advanced environmental design. The project is being planned to be the terminus of a potential transit connection between the Stamford Transportation Center, Darien, and Greenwich. Harbor Point has been recommended for a high-speed ferry landing and federal funds have been awarded for ferry service connecting Bridgeport, Stamford, and New York City. The project is considering an Energy Improvement District, which would relieve congestion on the regional grid.

Harbor Point will feature 80 acres of mixed-use space, all within a 10-minute walk from the Stamford Transportation Center. The design of the project is a prime example of Smart Growth and is consistent with the growth management principles of Connecticut’s



Future Harbor Point Development

Conservation and Development Policies Plan.

The planned improvements will revitalize an area with existing infrastructure. Four thousand housing units will be created at multiple price points, and 400 of these will be affordable. The project also exemplifies the best of TOD by creating a labor force growth center within walking distance of the train station and large employment centers. This will reverse the housing-transportation paradigm that for years has had people moving farther and farther from their place of work. In addition to reducing traffic congestion, this development will provide a means for the City, as well as the State, to retain its valuable labor force.

City of Stamford – Stamford Downtown Light Rail Concept Plan and Feasibility Study

This Study provided an innovative market analysis of the economic development and financial impacts that would occur if a streetcar system were implemented in downtown Stamford. The three components of the analysis were a corridor market analysis, a development impacts analysis, and a financial analysis.

The Study demonstrated that the construction of a streetcar or light-rail transit (LRT) line in Downtown Stamford could have a major impact on travel patterns, TOD, and redevelopment prospects in the potential streetcar corridor. Existing research from other communities was combined with an evaluation of key TOD factors in Stamford to build a real estate market analysis that assessed expected future conditions of the development market as it would

exist without the transit investment.

This analysis assumes that a transit line could be implemented over the course of five to ten years. Despite the implementation of the transit service requiring a five- to ten-year time line, it is anticipated that the land use and development impacts may begin to take effect prior to the initial operating date of service. Experience from other communities suggests that development impacts begin once funding for a project is in place and design work is underway.

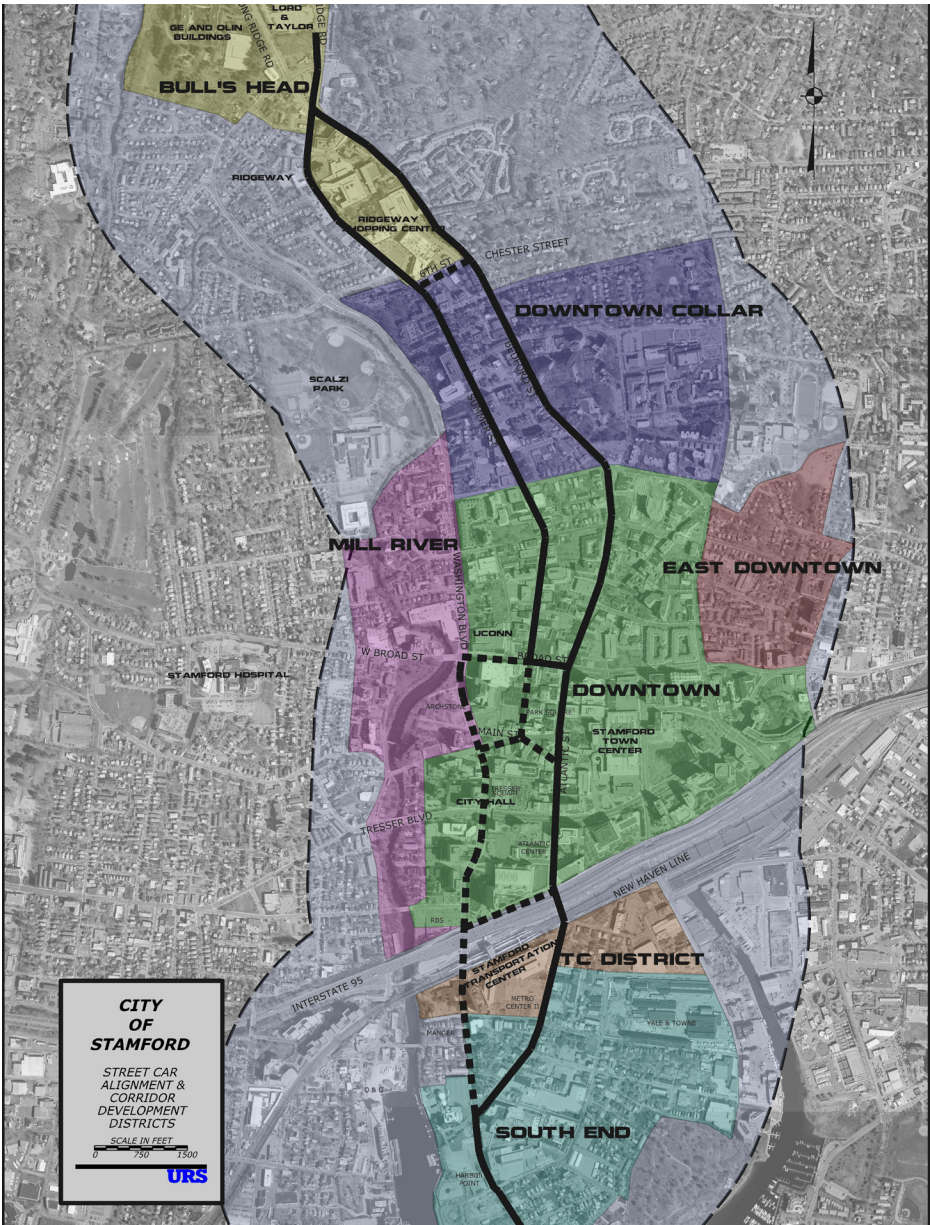
Property Value Impact

The impacts of a new streetcar system on overall property values can be significant. The Study concludes that the City of Stamford could capture future financial benefits from the streetcar system to help fund the project’s operating or capital costs. This is based on the idea that access to a transit service improves the accessibility of a site, particularly in an urban setting. This additional level of accessibility and convenience for travelers translates into higher property values for adjacent properties.

According to recent research on the property value impacts of LRT and streetcar systems, property values increase for commercial and residential parcels adjacent to transit. The size of the increase, however, is dependent on the local market, geography, land use, and distance from the rail station. It is reasonable to estimate up to a 10% to 15% increase in property values for commercial and residential parcels near the proposed Stamford streetcar line.



Stamford Transportation Center



Stamford Streetcar Development Districts

Economic Development Impact

The streetcar system could lead to increased development density and accelerated growth on redevelopment sites adjacent to the alignment and stations. The increased accessibility and convenience of urban sites located near transit not only drives up the value of those properties, but it also makes them more attractive as development sites, particularly for dense, transit-supportive uses such as office buildings and mixed-use residential.

Examples from Portland, Denver, Dallas, and other communities show an accelerated pace and density of development. All show the scale of private investment along the transit lines. The Portland example in particular demonstrates how development density increases as one gets nearer the transit line.

Town of Redding – Georgetown TOD

The approved Georgetown TOD is located at the site of the former Gilbert and Bennet Wire Company facility in Redding. This planned development would include 416 units of diverse housing, more than 300,000 square feet of commercial space, a performing arts center, a health club, a bed and breakfast, and a new Metro-North railroad station with a parking garage.



Georgetown - Existing Structure

Georgetown has been planned as a livable and walkable neighborhood. All the buildings and areas will be connected by safe and attractive pedestrian pathways. Access for automobiles will be provided by passageways constructed behind the buildings.

A new Georgetown train station on the Danbury Branch would connect the new village center with Norwalk, Stamford, Greenwich, and New York City. No one in the development would be more than a ten-minute walk from the train station.

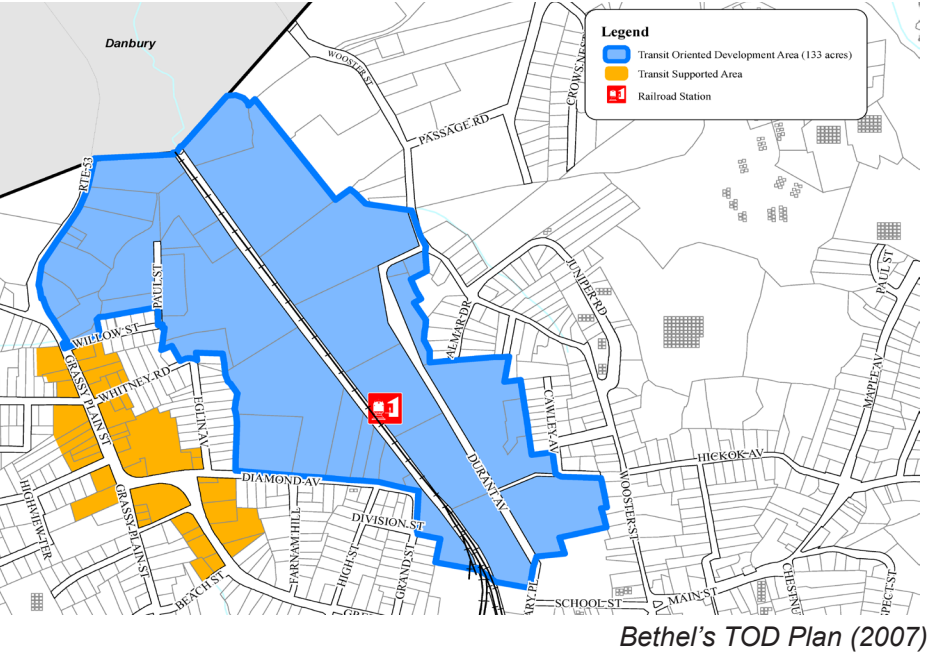
Town of Bethel – TOD in Downtown Bethel

The Danbury Branch train station serving Bethel is located on the northern fringe of the Bethel Village Center. This center is compact, pedestrian-friendly, and contains a mix of commercial, office, and institutional land and building uses surrounded by a variety of housing types. Bethel Station was located in the middle of this village center until the 1990s, when it was relocated approximately 2,200 feet to the north to provide for improved parking and to eliminate congestion caused by trains blocking Main Street while stopped at the station.

The 2007 Bethel Plan of Conservation and Development supports rail-oriented TOD around Bethel Station. As stated in the Plan, “one area that is appropriate for TOD is the area adjacent to the Metro-North Railroad Station on Durant Avenue. The Board of Selectmen, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Economic Development Commission should work together to begin the process of assembling appropriate parcels in the area for TOD development.” The Plan calls for amendments to the Town’s zoning regulations to encourage multi-story buildings, small front setbacks, ground floor retail and restaurants with upper story

residential uses, structured parking, and landscaped sidewalks that feature benches, water fountains, and other pedestrian amenities. The Plan also states that “in addition to transit-oriented developments, there may also be locations appropriate for moderately dense residential development (approximately 10 to 15 units per acre) that integrate transit options by providing access to the train station. The area around Grassy Plain north of Greenwood Avenue should be examined as a potential location for transit supported development.”

In recent decades the number of Bethel residents that commute daily to Stamford and other southwestern towns has continued to increase. This commuter flow is one market that could be served in Bethel by the proposed TOD area and related housing. Another potential market would be the reverse flow, coastal commuters travelling to office locations in the new TOD. This would reflect the trend found along the Shoreline East rail passenger service east of New Haven, where commuters increasingly reach new



employment along the rail line.

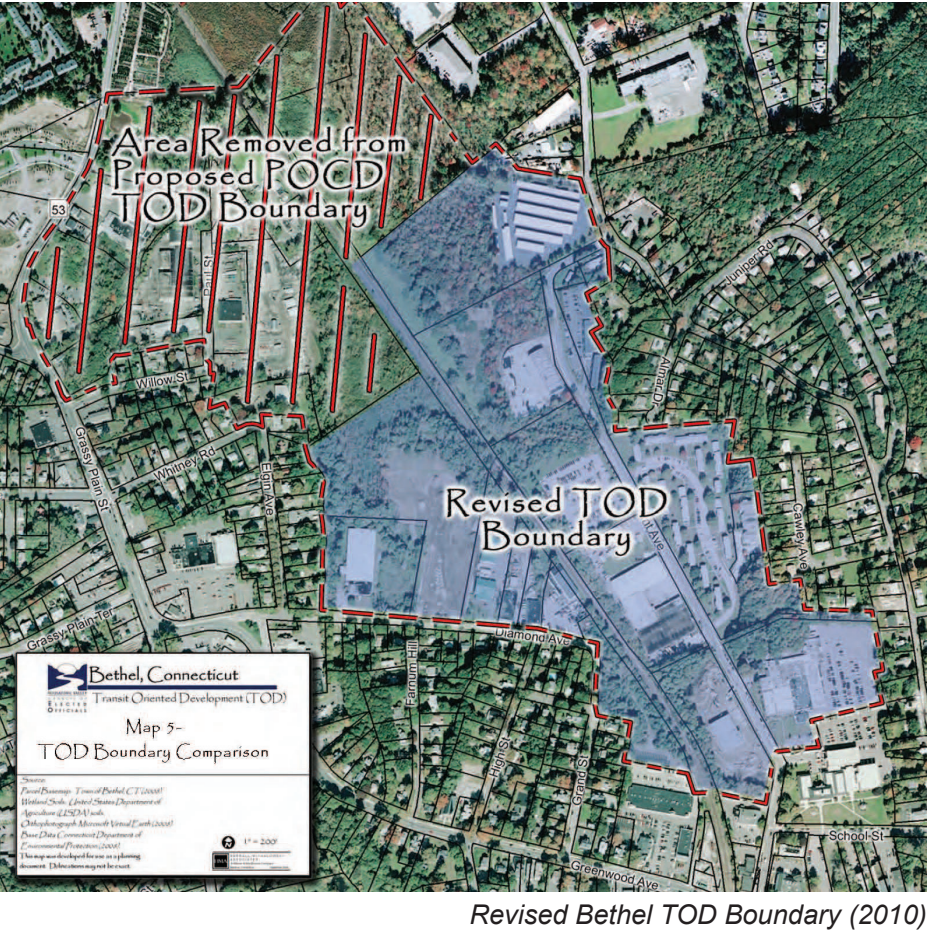
Town of Bethel – Bethel Station TOD Feasibility Study

In March 2010, the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO) released the Bethel Rail Station Transit-Oriented Development Feasibility Study, which was prepared by Harrall-Michalowski Associates. The Study responded to the recommended actions put forth in Bethel’s 2007 Plan of Conservation and Development. The Study analyzed the land use, environment, and infrastructure surrounding the rail station in Bethel and identified

several TOD-supportive characteristics of the area surrounding Bethel Station, including mixed use development, proximity to downtown Bethel, the availability of developable parcels, multi-family residential uses, and significant traffic volumes.

Based on these characteristics, the Study redefined the Bethel TOD District. This redefinition decreased the size of the district from the 2007 Plan. The Study explained this change by demonstrating that the northern area of the original district was too far from the station, had too many wetlands, and lacked transit-supportive land uses. The Study then developed conceptual plans for the newly-defined TOD District and analyzed the financial, sewer, and traffic impacts of the plans.

The Study recommended a series of action items that would be needed for the Town to move forward with the development of TOD around Bethel Station. These steps include educating property owners about the benefits of TOD; rezoning the areas around Bethel Station to support TOD; encouraging CTDOT to build a west platform at the station; and considering regulations for transit-supportive development with lower densities than a TOD. To support these recommendations, the Study included a sample of TOD zoning regulations.



City of Norwalk – South Norwalk Rail Station Intermodal Facility Study

It was the City’s and Norwalk Transit District’s goal to develop a fully integrated intermodal facility to encourage and promote optimal, safe, and seamless connections between a variety of transportation modes including rail, bus, shuttles, taxis, automobiles, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The South Norwalk intermodal facility will be designed to promote additional development and TOD in the area. While respecting the existing neighborhood community and culture, the facility will act as an anchor to other development centers within the City of Norwalk and promote the development of housing and amenities that are affordable, sustainable, and beneficial to the community.

In an effort to encourage and promote public transit usage, decrease regional traffic congestion, and redevelop the area surrounding the station, a preliminary TOD study was performed for the area surrounding the station. The report findings establish that the intermodal station will support the development of mixed-income, high-density housing, retail, and other amenities located on the station site and in the surrounding area.



City of New Haven – New Haven Union Station Transit-Oriented Development Study

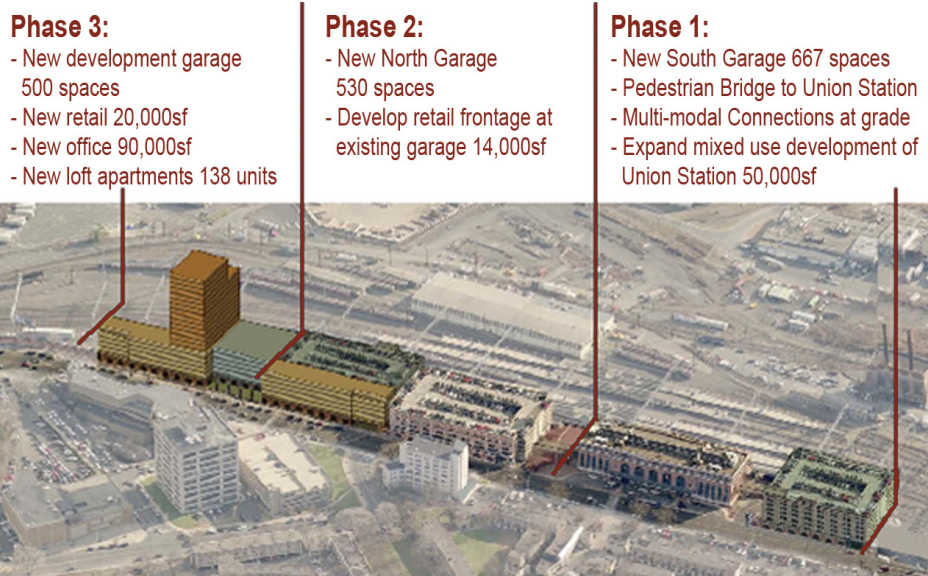
Union Station is a principle hub in Connecticut for passenger rail service. The existing station parking demand exceeds the available supply, and the market is strong for office, retail, and residential uses. There is also significant opportunity for TOD.

The purpose of the Study was to evaluate the current and future

parking demands and market conditions with the goal of developing a conceptual design to meet the growing parking demand and encouraging TOD opportunities.

The Study identified successful TOD projects and provided alternative conceptual plans. The Study evaluated the financial feasibility of the proposed plans and provided input on governance. The TOD strategies were to foster mixed use at and adjacent to the station; enhance connectivity; pursue pedestrian-friendly streets and places; and plan for flexibility and future developments.

The final recommendations call for nearly 1,700 parking spaces, 34,000 square feet of retail development, 90,000 square feet of office space, 50,000 square feet of mixed use development, 138 apartments, a pedestrian bridge to Union Station, and at-grade multimodal connections. These enhancements will be developed in a phased approach, to be completed in 2017.



Union Station Future TOD Phases

Route 7 Transportation and Land Use Study

Route 7 is a key regional north-south roadway in western Connecticut that has seen traffic growth and increased congestion that have been spurred by development. A Route 7 Expressway or bypass route has been considered by the Connecticut Department of Transportation in the past, but these proposals never progressed beyond preliminary stages. While localized roadway widening and intersection improvements have been completed or are underway, traffic choke points are a growing problem.

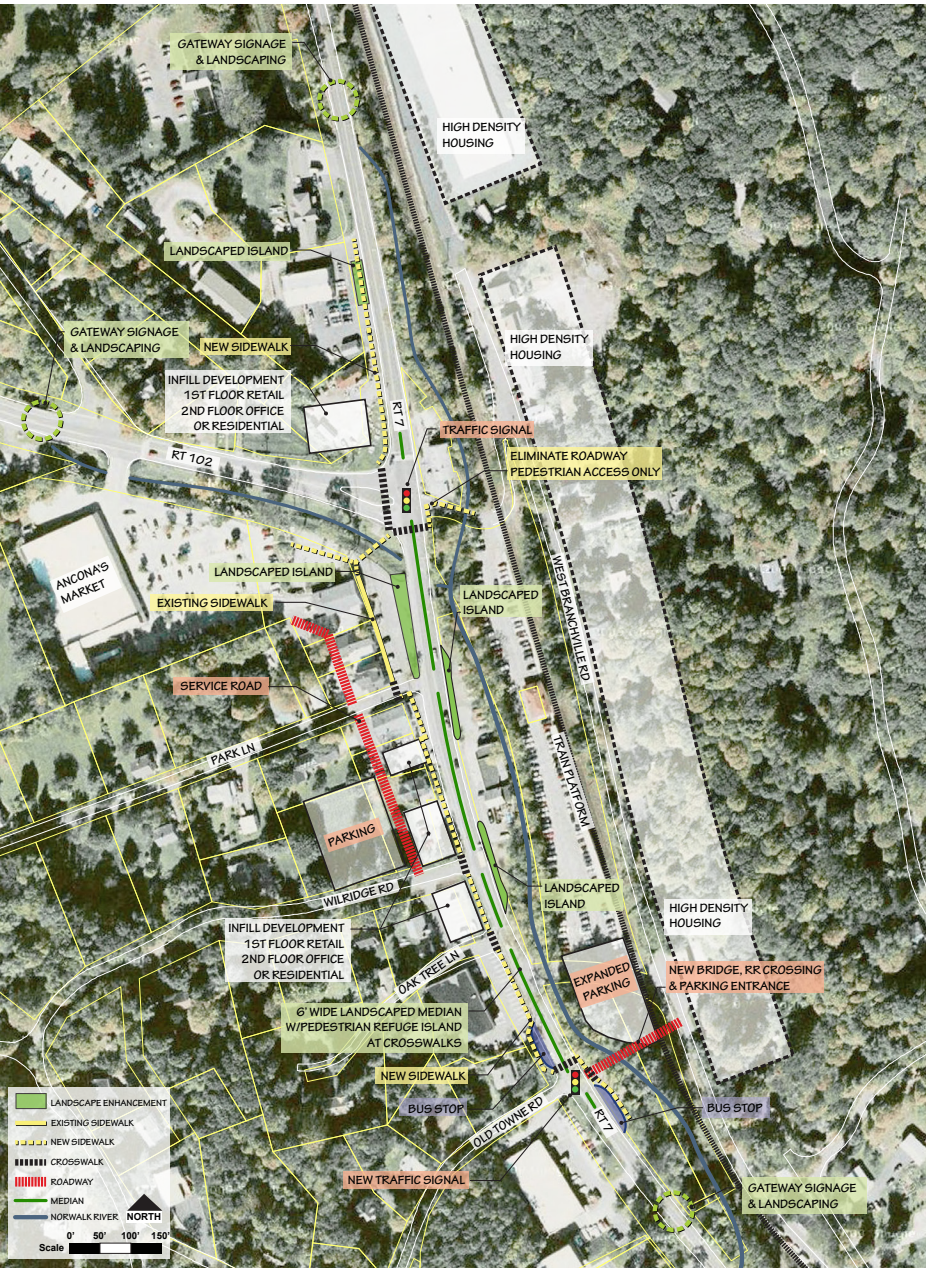
The Route 7 Study seeks to develop creative yet practical solutions to address these issues and get the best use of Route 7 in future years without compromising community character or valued environmental resources. Ultimately, the Study will create a

plan for Route 7 that includes recommended actions for improving travel, strategies for directing growth in ways that are in line with the character and desires of the affected municipalities, and appropriate tools for fulfilling these objectives.

The Study seeks to maximize the capacity on Route 7 while improving overall safety and access to commuter rail service on the Danbury Branch Line. The Study will also explore ways to improve bus service and enhance bicycle and pedestrian facilities in a way that complements rail service in the study corridor. The strategies developed by the Study will center on a goal of encouraging continued economic growth through Smart Growth principles such as compact, mixed use, human scale, walkable communities and transit-oriented development.

Thus far, an Existing Conditions and Trends report has been completed. Efforts are ongoing to analyze future conditions, develop land use scenarios, identify potential locations for TOD, identify a preferred land use scenario, and identify recommended transportation system improvements. The final report for ther Study is expected in late 2010.

There is ongoing coordination between the Route 7 Transportation and Land Use Study and the Danbury Branch Improvement Study. This coordination has included meetings to discuss the Branchville Station parking improvements, accessibility improvements, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements. These modifications will enhance the station’s TOD viability.



Route 7 Study Draft Concept Plan for Branchville Station Area (Option 1)